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Remodel your Bathroom without the Headaches

(Posted Date: Wednesday, February 7, 2007)

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Among all home renovation projects, bathroom renovations can be the most daunting.

Here are some tips to help make your renovation project a lovely re-master instead of a costly disaster.

First, plan your budget. Decide how much you can afford on your renovation based not only on your finances but also on the value of your home. Work with a designer or contractor to put together a plan that's suitable for your needs and goals.



FIT FOR A KING: At left, ensuite bath reno that features custom cabinetry, air Jacuzzi, heated flooring and towel warmer among other features.

“A basic installation for bathroom renovation is between \$8,000 and \$10,000,” says Mark Ashton, of Ashton Renovations.

Those figures includes replacing existing fixtures such as floor tiles, shower tiles and the vanity and sink, plus painting and accessories. Add at least \$5,000 if you need to move walls or plumbing.

“Remember that older homes cost far more than newer homes because of older plumbing and structures,” Ashton says. “The cost of materials for a mid-range renovation can be up to \$10,000.”

Once the “real” work begins there are a million things to go over, but here are the essential elements that you should never miss.

Choose readily available faucets wherever possible, and avoid plumbing products made outside of North America.

“You should always keep in mind that the more complicated and obscure the fixture, the more costly it will be to install, maintain and obtain parts for if repairs are needed,” Ashton said.

For the shower, a thermostatic control valve system allows for specific water temperature selection.

A rainhead shower, handheld adjustable shower spray and multiple valves, which control each outlet of water, usually accompany these systems.

Shower controls should be accessible from both inside and outside the shower and be located between 38” and 48” above the floor, depending on user’s height, says Garrett Hardy, of Hemel Group.

Stone tiles might make for a beautiful enhancement to your bathroom, but they are porous and require extensive waterproofing and maintenance. Ashton considers porcelain and ceramic tiles an excellent alternative. They are available in many colours and patterns that mimic stone.

Install custom glass enclosures for your shower or bath if you can afford to spend a little extra. They are often the most impressive aspect of a remodeled bathroom. Custom glass costs anywhere

from \$800 to enclose a tub to \$2,000 for a floor-to-ceiling shower enclosure.

Be careful with recessed shelving and seating, however, as they can be problematic in showers.

“These areas are prone to cracking grout in corners and edges where water builds up and finds its way in,” says Ashton.

He suggests using waterproofing products such as Recess It or Schluter Kurdi membranes when installing recessed shelving or seating in showers.

“Solid jambs around shelving (without grout joints) should also be used in the tiling phase to emulate the look of a window sill with a slight overhang,” he said.

Proper tiling is critical to the longevity of your bathroom.

“Always make sure that your contractor is using the right tile backer, Ashton cautions.

Alternatives like Densshield tile backer, concrete board or Schluter Kurdi membrane are okay, but drywall should never be used in showers.

Also, make sure tiles are being cut accurately with a wet saw.

Check to see if grout lines line up and tiles are spaced accurately to accommodate the grout (at least 1/8” in showers).

And, according to Ashton, painted ceilings in showers are inferior to tiled ceilings and require maintenance.

Height is also very important, especially if you have children. “Vanity height with counter top varies between 33” for children and 36” for an average adult,” says Hardy. “If using a vessel sink deduct the height of the sink from the vanity so the lip of the sink is equal to the height.”

Choosing how to paint your bathroom is definitely one of the more enjoyable parts of the job.

Think carefully about the colours you like and the mood you want to set. When choosing paint colours, make sure you contrast with other elements.

For example, choosing a lighter but similar colour to your tiles will accentuate that aspect of the bathroom.

In addition to general lighting on a dimmer, task lighting is recommended for grooming & showering.

“The dimmer is great at night, as your eyes do not have to adjust to the bright pot lights,” Hardy said.

Maintenance is the key once it’s all done. Make sure your bathroom is checked at least once a year by a professional.

“They should be looking for evidence of excessive moisture, deteriorating grout and/or caulking and leaking fixtures,” Ashton suggests. “If caught early problems can be corrected and costly repairs can be avoided.”
